

JAN 23 2015

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that an estimated
2 2,700,000 children nationwide have at least one parent that is
3 incarcerated, and studies conducted by the National Fatherhood
4 Initiative show that in terms of negative impacts on children,
5 incarceration may be worse than the death of a parent or the
6 divorce of parents. Even more disheartening is the evidence
7 that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to become
8 incarcerated themselves as teenagers or adults, thus continuing
9 the "cycle of incarceration" that sadly becomes generational in
10 some families.

11 These statistics have not gone unnoticed by children and
12 family serving organizations in Hawaii who have developed
13 mentoring and other types of social services aimed at assisting
14 these children. However, there continues to be major gaps in
15 services for these children because funding for programs aimed
16 at helping them has never been prioritized, largely due to a
17 lack of data to justify the extent of the problem in Hawaii.



1 This is especially true for service providers who are trying to
2 access federal funding that is programmed to assist children and
3 families and break the cycle of incarceration.

4 In January 2014, the legislative keiki caucus established a
5 working group to explore the issues surrounding children and
6 families impacted by incarceration. Called the family
7 reunification working group, the group was comprised of
8 representatives from several organizations and service providers
9 and parents of children who have been affected by incarceration.
10 The group established two immediate priorities, one of which was
11 to develop a database of children in Hawaii impacted by
12 incarceration. During the past year, the working group explored
13 various ways to collect the data needed to identify the number
14 and basic demographics of these children and concluded that the
15 fastest and easiest way to collect the essential data was to ask
16 for this data on current forms now used by the department of
17 public safety's corrections division to intake offenders
18 entering the Hawaii corrections system.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 353, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
20 amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately
21 designated and to read as follows:



(2) The number of children under the age of eighteen, per
offender who is a parent."

SECTION 3. The department of public safety, in collaboration with the family reunification work group established by the legislative keiki caucus and other stakeholders, shall devise the forms or questions to be asked of offenders upon intake into the correctional system to obtain the information required pursuant to section 2 of this Act. The department of public safety shall also develop a plan for the management of the data collected and public disclosure of the data in accordance with all applicable laws.

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

INTRODUCED BY:

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Report Title:

Public Safety; Incarcerated Parent Data

Description:

Requires the department of public safety to collect data relating to the number of incoming offenders into the state correctional system who are parents and the number of children they have that are under the age of eighteen.

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